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ABSTRACT

Departments of speech communication need to strengthen their positions within their institutions now in order, not only to survive, but to contribute to the changes in higher education needed for the new millennium. To have the necessary strength, a department must be and be seen as high in quality, central to the mission of its institution, and interdisciplinary but with strong disciplinary anchors. The Speech Communication Association (SCA) must help strengthen departments by: (1) regular training and support of department chairs; (2) maintaining an up-to-date library of materials that can help departments strengthen themselves (e.g., model mission statements, database of the profession, detailed descriptions of exemplar departments in various types of institutions); and (3) publicizing, through the major national media and forums, the important scholarly contributions of the discipline. Departments that have built the strength beforehand should have little difficulty repelling attacks by providing credible evidence of their quality and centrality to their institutions. The SCA can provide some limited help in such situations, especially information on what other departments have done in similar situations and assistance in identifying consultants. (RS)

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The Speech Communication Association:

Advancement of the Discipline

December 1996

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ED 403 614

Executive Summary

1. Departments of speech communication need to strengthen their positions within their institutions now in order, not only to survive, but to contribute to the changes in higher education needed for the new millennium.
2. To have the necessary strength, a department must *be* and *be seen as*:

☐ High in quality
☐ Central to the mission of its institution
☐ Interdisciplinary, but with strong disciplinary anchors

3. The SCA must help strengthen departments by:

☐ Regular training and support of department chairs
☐ Maintaining an up-to-date library of materials that can help departments strengthen themselves. E.g., model mission statements, database on the profession, detailed descriptions of exemplar departments in various types of institutions.
☐ Publicizing, through the major national media and fora, the important scholarly contributions of the discipline

4. Departments that have built the strength beforehand should have little difficulty repelling attacks by providing credible evidence of their quality and centrality to their institutions. The SCA can provide some limited help in such situations, especially

☐ information on what other departments have done in similar situations
☐ assistance in identifying consultants

ADVANCEMENT OF THE DISCIPLINE

In 1995, the then Second Vice President of the Speech Communication Association, Judith S. Trent, appointed a Task Force on Discipline Advancement to recommend what departments and the Association might do to ensure that they and our discipline flourish in these difficult times. Specifically, the Task Force was asked to:

1. Recommend strategies and procedures that communication programs can use to promote themselves within their own institutions.
2. Recommend strategies and procedures that communication programs can use to defend themselves if placed under attack during campus downsizing or budget-cutting exercises.
3. Recommend a planned procedure for the rapid, thorough, and systematic response of SCA to threatened programs.
4. Recommend or draft materials that communication programs can use to promote themselves within their own institutions.
5. Draft or recommend specific upgrades in the material that the National Office provides to programs

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in crisis on their campuses.

This report contains responses to the first four of these charges. A response to the fifth charge will follow association-wide reaction to the recommendations contained in this report.

The National and Institutional Context

To understand and appreciate the situation facing our discipline and our recommendations for coping with them, they must be viewed in the context of what is happening to higher education in the United States today. The future of the discipline of speech communication cannot be assessed in any valid way except in the context of higher education generally, of the liberal arts particularly, and of American society.

It is no news to anyone in the field that many of the departments in our field feel pressured today. They are unable to obtain sufficient funds to hire the faculty they need to meet student demand; they sometimes even have difficulty retaining lines to replace those who retire or resign. Worse, we hear of the occasional department being threatened with extinction, or even being eliminated. And, increasingly, some of our Ph.D.s are having difficulty getting academic jobs. Even when they get jobs, too often they are temporary or non-tenure-track positions. It is easy to become paranoid, thinking that "they"--whoever "they" are--are out to get us.

Although these problems and threats are real, we err if we assume that these problems are unique to our discipline, that they are somehow different, either in kind or degree, than the threats to most of higher education today. In fact, our discipline is better off than many.

Current demand for communication knowledge and skills

Unlike many disciplines, there continues to be strong student demand for college work in almost every aspect of communication. The United States Department of Education reports, for example, that from 1973-74 to 1991-92 (the last year for which we found reliable data), the number of communication degrees conferred each year tripled. In many of our colleges and universities, the demand for our courses is greater than our present faculties can satisfy. And it is important to note that much of that demand does not come from students in the traditional liberal arts departments, but from such departments or colleges as business, nursing, engineering, and even medicine. The faculties of those departments or colleges in recent years have been adding to their degree requirements substantial work in communication.

In doing this, faculty in these colleges are responding to the marketplace, as well as their perceptions of student needs. Employers in business and industry are insisting that those they hire understand communication processes and be skilled in the communicative arts. These qualities are important for good performance in almost any job; they are essential for employees who move into management or many of the public service professions.

These faculty in business and engineering also know that much of what most students learn about business and engineering will be irrelevant before many years have passed, but communication knowledge and skills will always be relevant. Equally important, they will facilitate employees' acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

Realization of the importance of communication skills and knowledge has come more recently to the health professions. This awakening may be due to increased competition among the providers of health

services, coupled with more outspoken consumers; or it may be due to the realization that effective treatment of many, if not all, health problems involves more than the proper drugs and physical care. As a result, substantial communication education is becoming a basic part of contemporary medical and nursing training.

Demand for Communication Scholarship

Unfortunately, neither the academy nor the larger society is as aware of the potential value of communication scholarship as it is of the value of communication skills. This is a major, perhaps the major, problem that must be overcome in order to ensure continuing support and development of the discipline.

Demands of the 21st Century

Although speech communication has made important contributions to contemporary higher education, its potential contributions for the future are even greater. As we approach the new millennium, the needs of our society are changing quite substantially. Higher education, if it is going to adequately serve those needs of students and the society of the 21st century, needs to change equally substantially. We believe strongly that no discipline has more to contribute to the kind of higher education that should result than the discipline of speech communication.

Decline in Support for Higher Education

Despite the need and demand for some of what our discipline has to offer, we share with most of higher education some severe problems. One of the most worrisome is the general decline in public support for higher education, a decline in support that is difficult to understand, since it is occurring at a time when higher education has become more essential than it has ever been for young people hoping to make a decent living. State legislatures have been appropriating a steadily decreasing proportion of tax revenues to the public colleges and universities, while allocating a steadily increasing proportion to the public schools and social services. The schools and social services have substantial needs, so one cannot argue against the greater support they are getting, but the trend is having a toll on public higher education.

Nor are most of the private colleges and universities cushioned from the shortage of funds. With the exception of a small group of the best known privates, the gifts and bequests on which they depend have failed to keep pace with the need. Even the churches that once built and supported many of our fine colleges and universities have been steadily withdrawing that support. For a while, the decline in support of the privates was balanced by sharply increasing the cost of tuition. But it appears that a ceiling for tuition levels may have been reached, or even exceeded. Some institutions have begun to lower tuition rates in order to win back the enrollment of students lost because of the high costs.

To compound the problem of the slowdown of growth in available monies, there has been a sharp increase in the demand for colleges and universities to spend ever more money on activities that do not contribute to educating students. Increased demands for "accountability" force us to expend funds on more accountants, data gatherers, and report writers, rather than on needed teachers, library materials, and instructional equipment.

There are greater demands for non-academic student services today than there have been in the past. Psychological counseling services for students, for example, have expanded far more rapidly in most institutions than our academic programs, and yet we have difficulty meeting the demand for these

services. Unfunded government mandates tilt the balance of expenditures for non-academic purposes even higher. Most of these mandates are for good purposes, but they take funds away from educational programs. Today's requirements for the care of research animals are far more costly than they have been in the past. Some of the requirements of the ADA--the Americans with Disabilities Act--are increasing our costs substantially. Again, most of these mandates are fully justified: higher education ought to be available to everyone who can benefit from it, we ought to be sensitive to the quality of life for all living creatures; but we need to recognize that these "goods" have a cost.

Loss of Faith in the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Arts:

Another, even more worrisome problem, is the general public's lack of belief in the importance of the humanities, the social sciences, and the arts. The most visible manifestation of this problem is the sharp decline in federal support for the humanities, arts, and social sciences. Even more telling than the decline is the fact that the base from which the cuts are being made was not very high to begin with. The only areas of research that are flourishing in the face of Washington's budget-cutting mood are the health sciences. As funding of the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities and of the social science portion of the National Science Foundation is declining; funding for the National Institutes of Health continues to rise. This could not occur if the public believed in the importance of the arts, humanities, and social sciences as they do in the sciences and, especially, in the medical sciences. Americans are obviously not convinced that the study of literature and history, languages and sociology, political science and geography, or even botany and geology make much difference. And, fortunately or unfortunately, the public views of the study of communication theory and rhetoric, or of mass communication processes and film history, will not change sharply unless their views of all of the humanities and social sciences improve. This is a major challenge for our field and for all of higher education.

As a first step in changing the publics' view of what we do, we need to think through carefully why what we do is important, why it is worth a goodly portion of our society's resources and the resources of our institutions.

Can we justify or, better, demonstrate to the public, in a persuasive way, that all of the money the society is giving to our colleges and universities for us to work on our scholarship is worth that investment? Equally important, can our colleagues in the other humanities and social sciences do so?

Can we justify or, better, demonstrate to the public, in a persuasive way, that what we are teaching its children is making enough difference in the quality of their lives to justify the investment in higher education for the individual student and for the society?

Unless we can persuade the public that supporting teaching and scholarship in the liberal arts is a good investment for the society, our efforts to gain and maintain strength for communication studies within the academy will come to naught, for the academy itself, as we know it today, will be unable to survive.

Assuming that the liberal arts, with its balance of humanities, social sciences, and sciences will survive in a relatively healthy condition, what can our departments in communication studies do in order to flourish in the academy? We focus on departments here because, if our departments do not flourish, our field will not flourish.

Strengthening the Department's Position

Within the institution

The fiscal and political pressures outlined above are of special concern to departments of speech communication for at least two reasons. First, a frequently used criterion for making these decisions is "centrality to the mission of the institution." University administrators often do not number speech communication within the established disciplines of the liberal arts, and hence do not begin with the presumption that it is central to the institution's mission. Second, deans and central administrators are often unfamiliar with speech communication as an academic discipline. They frequently think of it essentially, or even exclusively, as a skills-oriented teaching field without significant research traditions or commitments, a characterization which usually will place it at a disadvantage within the institution's value structure.

It behooves our discipline, therefore, to be especially savvy in understanding these pressures and developing appropriate strategies. It is a mistake to assume that this is only a matter of public relations, publicity, or institutional politics, although these elements are undoubtedly present. Probably more important are fundamental intellectual and conceptual challenges.

By the time a department is threatened with downsizing or elimination, it already is in a one-down position. Arguments and evidence offered in its behalf will be seen as defensive moves and discounted because of the obvious self-interest they reflect. Defensive strategies are sometimes necessary, but they can be credibly employed only selectively. Given the institutional context and decision-making criteria, some threatened departments in communication studies (as in any other discipline) probably will deserve to be cut back or eliminated.

While it is important for SCA to assist in developing strategic defenses and employing them where appropriate, the most powerful steps to advance the discipline are those that will enable departments and programs to avoid being placed on a threatened list in the first place. Broadly speaking, these steps involve both *what we do* and *how we help others understand what we do.*

Mission and identity

Educational institutions differ markedly in their missions, values, goals, and priorities. It is important that a communication department or program understand these aspects of its institution and that it match them. A clear target for reduction will be a unit whose mission is at variance, or in conflict, with that of the institution. To state obvious examples, a communication department in a research university will be in trouble if its members conduct no research and seek to justify their choice by saying that they teach large numbers of undergraduates in basic skills courses. Equally, in an institution that especially values preparing students for the work-place, a communication department will be in trouble if it abandons the teaching of basic skills in favor of a curriculum of seminars that review the latest theoretical controversies in the journals of the field.

The task of matching the mission of the unit and its institution is more difficult because situations do not present themselves as starkly as in these examples. Research universities are currently strengthening their commitments to undergraduate teaching, for example, but they usually will not consider excellence in undergraduate teaching to be sufficient compensation for the absence of research performance. Similarly, small colleges that emphasize teaching have found themselves drawn increasingly into the ongoing conversations of the discipline, yet few would consider prominence in such conversations to excuse inadequacy in the classroom.

The most fundamental step for a department or program to take, then, is to match its mission and

priorities to those of the institution. This step is harder than it may seem. Institutional goals are contained not only in public documents but in the enacted culture of the organization, and these are not always congruent. It is also sometimes difficult to separate the enacted from the idealized goals of the department. Realizing that we are evaluated more on our achievements than on our aspirations, we should engage in the sobering self-analysis that will yield a description of our mission and values as enacted in our behavior.

Even stronger than a demonstration that the unit's mission is *consistent* with the institution, though, is a strong case that the unit *contributes to* the institution's fulfillment of its mission. If the goal of the college or university is to bridge the gulf between social sciences and humanities, for example, then a claim that communication does that -- while strong -- is not as powerful as a claim that communication does that and provides models by which other disciplines might do so as well.

Following are some specific considerations related to the match between departmental and institutional missions.

1. The statement of a unit's mission should reflect a clear sense of the unit's identity. It should be an explication of the intellectual substance of the discipline rather than such an all-purpose statement as "teaching practical skills" or "offering a liberal education." Moreover, it should attempt to define a unique substantive anchor for the discipline. Ideally, this anchor should be stated as a brief phrase or sentence representing the discipline's core concepts. Examples of such statements include "the making and sharing of meaning," "the symbolic creation of community," and "the relationship between messages and audiences."

The reasons for this suggestion are simple. An academic unit that cannot articulate what it studies is a likely candidate for elimination when a college or university is called upon to make hard choices. A unit whose basic mission is defined only by others may find that the priorities to which it is committed are "out of synch" with what those others expect. A unit whose notion of its substance duplicates that of another will likewise find itself on the list of threatened departments. So too will the unit whose notion is so vague or all-encompassing that its special contribution to the intellectual landscape is hard to identify. And so will the unit whose self-definition is incomprehensible.

Describing intellectual identity is especially difficult for the communication discipline because communication is ubiquitous. It is hard to imagine human activity that is not implicated in what we do. This ubiquity is a double-edged sword. If everything and everyone is involved in communication, one might reason, then why do we need a separate academic unit dedicated to it? A college or university could reduce or eliminate a department while maintaining that it was still committed to the study of communication. Impulses toward intellectual hegemony should be stifled in favor of a succinct statement of the special contribution made by the discipline to the intellectual landscape.

2. The tension between "disciplinarity" and "interdisciplinarity" should be carefully managed. Within the past decade, at least, there has been considerable discussion within the discipline about whether we have a "center" and, if so, what it is. As the various subfields of communication have proliferated and fragmented, it has become harder to see what they have in common. Moreover, to define some issues as central (and, by implication, others as peripheral) is to inscribe an academic hierarchy that may seem uncomfortable. In the face of these difficulties, it is tempting to assert that there is no center, or that it is futile to search for a center, or even that to regard communication as a discipline is a category error and that we should be viewed instead as an interdisciplinary field. This claim could be buttressed by the observation that in the "postmodern university" the traditional distinctions between fields are blurring fast

and hence that the interdisciplinary status of communication is a model for the structure of the 21st century university.

There is much in these formulations that is both appealing and true. But here's the rub. An interdisciplinary field without disciplinary anchors is vulnerable. It is the icing without the cake. We recommend, therefore, that units conceive of themselves as having a strong disciplinary foundation with interdisciplinary reach. This is not a matter of saying, for instance, that family communication is more foundational than rhetorical criticism, or vice versa. Rather, it is a matter of identifying the core concepts or unique perspectives that represent the vantage point for studying these subfields.

In stressing interdisciplinary reach, moreover, we should be able to demonstrate that our faculty and our scholarship do actually engage multiple disciplines. We will be suspect if we claim interdisciplinarity as a virtue and yet we are not involved in collaborations with scholars in other disciplines, we do not participate in interdisciplinary seminars or colloquia, and our work is not known by scholars in other disciplines. With respect to interdisciplinarity as to other components of our self-definition, consistency between the discipline's proclamations and its practices is of special importance.

3. A clear mission statement will be of little value if the department's substance or perspective is not regarded as important to the institution as a whole. Departments should make a case for the importance of what they do. Fortunately, there is considerable evidence to support such a case. It is often noted, for example, that communication skills are among the attributes most sought by employers, and mastery of these skills is best achieved through the integration of theory and practice. Similarly, economic analysis indicates that a substantial and growing percentage of the labor force is engaged in activities in which communication is central, and communication products figure very prominently in the list of American exports. The legal system increasingly stresses communication-based activities such as mediation and consultation as alternatives to the judicial process for resolving disputes. The nature of civic discourse and the condition of the public sphere are widely recognized as important cultural and political issues, and they relate directly to the quality of public communication. These are but a few obvious examples of the importance of communication.

Here too, consistency between statement and practice is important. For example, it will not help a department to emphasize the significance of communication skills if its curriculum de-emphasizes teaching and learning of such skills.

4. When completed, statements of mission and identity should not be left on the shelf. Rather, they should become part of ongoing dialogue within the institution. They should help the department chair educate deans and other administrators about the department; they should inform the deliberations of program review committees; they should be featured in departmental publications and provide talking points for speeches. Opportunities should be sought for endorsement of the department's mission and commitment to it by institutional decision-makers.

Assessment and evaluation

A department will strengthen its position within the institution, not just by having a clear sense of what it is doing but also by doing it well. Units that contribute positively to the overall strength of the institution are less likely to be vulnerable than are those for whom the contribution is dubious. It therefore behooves a department to be familiar with the standards and criteria for evaluation within the institution. Sometimes these are stated in very general terms ("quality of teaching and research") and sometimes in very specific terms ("rate of article publication per faculty member, credits taught per FTE, external funds received").

The department should ascertain the relevant criteria and standards, evaluate itself by reference to those standards, and develop strategies to improve its position.

Sometimes one or more institutional criteria may not seem appropriate. If a department wishes to make such a claim, it should do so outside the context of its own review and evaluation. There is a difference between engaging an institutional dialogue on the question, for example, of whether externally funded research is an appropriate criterion for a teaching institution, and maintaining that speech communication does not do very well on the criterion of funded research but that should be overlooked because the criterion is not appropriate.

Although the specific standards and measures vary greatly, most institutions will employ some combination of *quality*, *centrality*, and *viability* in determining (a) which units are relatively strong and relatively weak, and (b) whether weak units will be strengthened or eliminated. Each of these three standards should provide touchstones for departments seeking to enhance their position within their institution.

Quality. Departments should always challenge themselves to achieve higher levels of quality, and should actively resist any temptation toward self-satisfaction or complacency. This seemingly platitudinous remark has several action implications. However good their teaching, departments should strive to improve it; among other practices, they frequently should reassess curriculum and teaching methods. However active the faculty are in research, individuals and departments should strive for higher quality work, published in more substantial fora, addressing larger and more significant issues, and attracting greater notice within and beyond the discipline.

For a department, quality issues are especially likely to emerge with regard to hiring and promotion and tenure decisions. The standard to guide hiring decisions, however good the department, should be that the chosen candidate will raise the average quality of the group. Especially in an environment in which hiring opportunities may be scarce, every appointment is critical. Whenever possible, departments should seek the ability to retain a line and continue to search if the initial set of finalists does not produce a candidate who clearly meets a high standard.

Similarly, with regard to promotion and tenure decisions, the department should be willing to make hard decisions, saying no when the quality of the applicant does not clearly meet expectations. A department that "passes the buck" and finds its recommendations consistently overturned at higher levels will not establish a strong reputation for quality.

As suggested below, departments should publicize significant achievements, and the discipline generally should develop greater awareness of the present strength and increasing impact of the field's scholarship. At the same time, while departments should not be overly modest with respect to their quality, neither should they over-claim the significance of their achievements or the stature of their faculty. Doing so will only impair a department's credibility and cast doubt on its ability to make quality judgments.

Centrality. When colleges and universities are forced to reduce their budgets, centrality often emerges as the key criterion. Among departments and programs of recognized quality, which are most central to the mission of the institution? The disadvantage communication faces in responding to this question is twofold. First, there is no consistent configuration of the discipline. Departments go by various names, contain various subfields and specialties, and are housed in different schools, divisions, and colleges within institutions. As a result, it is hard to demonstrate that speech communication has achieved the canonical status often associated with centrality. Second, the fact that most Ivy League universities and

some other prestigious private institutions do not include communication departments will be seen by some administrators as sign evidence that communication is less central than other disciplines.

Fortunately, however, substantial claims for the centrality of the discipline are also available. Departments should formulate and advance the claims most appropriate to their circumstances. Among the possibilities that suggest themselves are: (a) the historical centrality of the discipline; rhetoric was one of the original seven liberal arts; (b) the position of the discipline on the cusp between the humanities and social sciences; (c) the prominent role of the discipline in teaching the skills and habits of thought that characterize the liberally educated person; (d) the discipline's prominence in collaborative relationships with other disciplines, as noted above; and (e) the degree to which society, the economy, the political process, and the labor force rely on "outputs" of the speech communication curriculum.

In arguing for centrality, departments should be careful to establish both the centrality of our *subject matter* and the centrality of our *discipline*. The latter does not necessarily follow from the former. Indeed, from the importance of communication in all areas of life one might be tempted to infer that "communication is too important to be left to the communication scholars." To avert such an inference it is essential to articulate the discipline's unique central concepts and perspectives. Developing a clear sense of mission and identity, as discussed above, will help to establish that centrality of the discipline is necessary to benefit from centrality of the subject matter.

Although departments should make these and other claims for the centrality of the discipline, in important respects "the proof is in the pudding." To the degree that scholars in the field engage significant rather than peripheral questions, to the degree that research builds cumulatively to address larger issues, to the degree that we advance intellectually beyond being derivative of work in other disciplines, to the degree that communication research is cited by and contributes to the work of scholars in other disciplines, and to the degree that the results of communication research make a difference, there will be a strong empirical claim for the centrality of the discipline. We therefore must insist upon, facilitate, and reward research that is innovative, rigorous, and significant. We must realize that social reality and the problems of community are negotiated in the discourse of human interaction, a discourse with a rich texture that needs to be thoroughly examined and assessed.

Viability. Viability is often examined with respect to enrollment issues. A program is thought viable if it attracts enough students of sufficient quality, if they make timely progress toward the completion of their degrees, and if they find appropriate opportunities upon graduation. But departments should think of viability in a broader context. A research program is viable if there is a critical mass of researchers whose output is regular, substantial, and of high impact. A curriculum is viable if resources permit offering, on a regular basis, the courses that are carried "on the books." In general, viability is a standard for assessing the ability of a program to achieve its stated goals. Whatever the department's mission, faculty should be certain that the mission is viable in light of existing resources and constraints.

One particular issue touching on viability is the relationship between our teaching and our research. Too often we conceive the teaching of performance courses as unrelated to research. Our professions to research are weakened by the fact that many faculty spend most of their time in teaching such courses, and the teaching may stagnate because it is not infused with the latest developments in research. Even worse, many faculty do not belong to any of our professional associations, do not read our journals or scholarly books, do not attend conventions or conferences, and depend only on basic textbooks to discover what is new in the field. Their behavior makes it hard to argue that less expensive, part-time adjunct faculty housed in another discipline cannot do the same job just as well.

To make the department more viable and its commitment to scholarship authentic, a closer relationship is needed between teaching and scholarship. Scholarship should reinforce the teaching mission and make teaching more powerful; teaching should be an important way to test and refine scholarly insights. Rethinking performance courses as research laboratories, not as collateral activities, will help to shift the perception of the field away from an emphasis on service to other disciplines and toward recognition of communication as a substantive discipline.

Publicizing the department's strengths

So far, this report has emphasized the department's self-analysis and internal evaluation. But strengthening the discipline also requires that the strength of the unit and of the discipline be effectively conveyed to others. Following are suggestions toward that end.

1. Departments should distinguish between discourse that is appropriate "within the family" and that which is appropriate for others. Few if any departments can afford public internecine warfare or lack of collegial respect. Departments that indulge in these practices become targets for elimination, if for no other reason, because they offer administrators the chance to rid themselves of a nuisance and save resources at the same time. Likewise, discussions about whether the field has a center, by what name we should call ourselves, or whether teaching is more important than research or vice versa, easily can be misunderstood by others.

No one should be expected to paper over real differences of interest or principle; nor can an appeal for harmony be permitted to lead us to accept the lowest common denominator of mediocrity. We must be realistic in assessing our strengths and weaknesses. But departments should become more savvy at differentiating between what is appropriate for public discourse and what is appropriate only in private situations. We must not allow ourselves to become our own worst enemies.

2. Communication scholars should become active in committees and projects that provide opportunity to share exemplars of the discipline with colleagues in other fields.

3. A more organized effort should be undertaken to identify and publicize the faculty's important research contributions, the grants it receives for research and teaching, major publications in prestige journals and presses, and significant positive citations in the research publications of cognate disciplines.

4. Departments should develop knowledge and articulate a case regarding the "market" and demand for their graduates and should track the career paths of their graduates.

5. Departments should compile and keep current those data that will help them to present themselves effectively within their own institutions. Examples of such data might include weekly newsletters, strategic plans, weighted student credit hour reports, student evaluations of courses and teaching, lists of recent publications by the faculty, and placement record of graduates.

Role of SCA in Supporting Department Efforts

The major contributions that the SCA can make to support departmental efforts to thrive, in addition to its ongoing activities that help to promote and improve the scholarly and instructional work in the field, are (a) to provide training and support for departmental executive officers, (b) to make available to departments information and models for the on-campus efforts to build support, and (3) to help make the scholarly contributions of the field more visible nationally.

DEO training and support

A common problem on most college and university campuses is the failure to provide in-service training for its administrators. The Speech Communication Association can make an important contribution to higher education and to the advancement of departments in the field by making available, on a regular basis, workshops for communication department chairs. At the minimum, every convention of the Association should include sessions that deal with the various functions of DEOs, from conflict resolution to promotion of interdepartmental research to communication with collegiate and university administrators.

A computer bulletin board could be set up for ongoing interaction and exchange of ideas among DEOs in the field on problems that arise.

And a panel or panels of former, successful DEOs could be organized to be available for advice via e-mail or phone when new DEOs encounter a problem on which they need help.

Library of information and models

The Speech Communication Association can provide a great service to the field by collecting and making available information and models that departments can use to strengthen their positions within their institutions.

1. SCA should assemble a representative collection of statements of mission and identity and add them to the material currently available in the "Rationale Kit."

2. Many individuals and departments are actively engaged in interdisciplinary collaboration. SCA should assemble an inventory of examples and models of such collaboration--both in order to suggest possibilities to others and to "tell the story" of the discipline as a whole.

3. Some evidence of the importance of communication is contained in the current SCA Rationale Kit. A more systematic effort should be undertaken to accumulate such evidence, drawn from a wide range of sectors of society and relating to different subfields of the discipline. These could be a valuable resource for use by departments in preparing their own statements.

4. Individual departments could profit from a closer information-sharing and dissemination relationship with SCA and other communication associations to increase our mutual awareness of significant instances of the field's intellectual impact on research and teaching in other fields, and on public policy.

5. SCA should develop and maintain an extensive database on the profession, including normative and comparative data, that can be used by departments for self-assessment and guides to improvement.

Raising national visibility of the field

The Speech Communication Association also should take a more proactive role in promoting the significant scholarly achievements of its members, as proposed in its 1996 Strategic Plan. Publicizing the scholarship of the field in the major popular media read by leaders in and outside the academy can improve the perceptions of the field and its place in the academy. Among the important outlets are the *Chronicle of Higher Education, The New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal.*

Repelling an Attack

What a program can do

No matter how good a department is or how central it might be to the mission of its institution, financial exigency or a misguided administrator can lead to its being threatened with down-sizing, amalgamation with another department, or even in an extreme case extinction. Should that occur, there are some steps that the good department can take to maximize its chances of repelling the threat.

In addition to answering any specific questions posed by the administrator suggesting downsizing, amalgamation, or elimination of the department, provide materials, both for that administrator and any above him or her, that point out, with great specificity and detail, the ways in which the department is contributing to the institution's stated goals. Some of the results of the most recent departmental review may be useful here. Do not gloss over problems nor make claims that can be shown to be wrong or exaggerated. Among the materials that might be included, depending upon the type of institution, are:

1. Scholarly productivity and reputation of the faculty:

- ☐ Average number of publications per year per faculty member.
- ☐ Quality of journals or presses in which publications are appearing.
- ☐ Research awards.
- ☐ Editorial positions of faculty members on major journals.

1. National rankings of department.
2. Grant and contract income.
3. Importance in the region. E.g.:

- ☐ Only Ph.D.-granting speech communication program in the region.
- ☐ Number of faculty it has trained for other colleges and universities in the state.

1. Intellectual quality of the major.
2. Fit of the major with the goals of the college or institution.
3. Success of the program.

- ☐ Student papers at conventions and in journals.
- ☐ Placement of graduates.

1. Success at getting women and minorities on its faculty.
2. Importance of its courses to the institution's educational mission.
3. Degree to which it is carrying a large share of the educational load of the institution:

- ☐ Large number of majors.
- ☐ High course enrollments.
- ☐ Student credit hours per faculty member, compared to other departments, or other humanities or social science departments.

1. Cost effectiveness compared to other departments.
2. Quality of teaching:

- ☐ Teaching evaluations, compared to other departments.
- ☐ Teaching awards.

1. Service the department has provided for the institution and the community.

Organize your students to lobby for the department and encourage them to have their families lobby. Provide them with facts and arguments. Parents, especially, can be effective lobbyists.

Alert the SCA and other scholars/teachers in the field immediately by phone and e-mail and elicit support. E-mail today is a fast and effective medium for diffusion of information and solicitation of help.

Among others, solicit help from all of the professional organizations to which any members of the department belong. Correspondence from officers of these organizations can be useful when directed to governing board members and the major administrators of one's institution.

Encourage letters to administration and governing board from:

1. Faculty in other departments, especially deans, chairs of other departments, other administrators, and highly respected faculty. The dean of another college that depends heavily on courses from the communication studies department can be an especially persuasive voice. Chairs or faculty members from departments which collaborate with speech communication faculty on seminars or research projects, or that often call on communication faculty to serve on graduate committees, can also be extremely helpful.
2. Graduate students.
3. Undergraduate majors, their families and friends.
4. Alumni, especially those in prestigious positions or who are major donors to the institution: a judge, a college professor of a major institution, vice-president or president of a major company.
5. Outstanding colleagues at other institutions that one's institution considers its peers. Former visiting faculty members comprise a knowledgeable and credible source of testimony.
6. Business and industry leaders, or leaders of other kinds of organizations, who have employed the department's students can also be influential voices.

In some cases, it may be productive to take one's case to the local media. Before doing so, though, be aware of the fact that this is a strategy fraught with land-mines. Among other dangers, it can backfire if the local publicity fails to evoke public support.

What SCA can do

The Speech Communication Association can be helpful to a beleaguered department in two major ways:

1. It can supply the department with copies of the detailed strategies and materials that other departments, especially departments similar to the one being threatened, have used to successfully ward off threats. For the Association's office to do this, of course, means that it must collect and maintain detailed information and copies of all relevant materials from those situations.
2. The SCA can also help to identify and gain the cooperation of individuals who might be used as consultants by a department, who might write persuasive letters of support, and who might be called upon to testify if there are campus hearings on the matter.

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Samuel L. Becker, Chair
William Eadie, Staff
Jesse G. Delia
Robert E. Denton
Isa N. Engleberg
Gail T. Fairhurst
Mary Anne Fitzpatrick
Robert Ivie
Joseph W. MacDoniels
Thomas A. McCain
Bishetta D. Merritt
Linda L. Moore
Paul E. Nelson
Bobby R. Patton
Linda L. Putnam
James E. Roever
Thomas M. Scheidel
William J. Seiler
Morris Snively
Kathleen J. Turner
David Zarefsky